





Residential Gardening and Lawn Care

Many pollutants can enter stormwater systems, groundwater, and water bodies as a result of typical lawn and gardening work. Runoff that is contaminated by pesticides and fertilizers can severely degrade receiving waters and result in adverse effects on fish and other aquatic life. Recent studies in the Puget Sound region detected pesticides in urban streams at levels that exceed limits set to protect aquatic life. Some gardening chemicals are also harmful to children and pets. Fertilizers add nutrients to water bodies causing unwanted algal blooms and other aquatic plant growth. Disposal of grass clippings and other vegetation into storm drains, stormwater ponds, roadside ditches and other water bodies can lead to decreased oxygen levels in stormwater as the vegetation decomposes. Decreased oxygen levels can be lethal to fish and other aquatic life. Several simple practices can be used to prevent these problems, and may result in improved lawn and garden quality. These practices should also be shared with private landscapers that conduct gardening and lawn care on your property.

Note: The term pesticide includes insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, rodenticides, etc.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

The following BMPs, or equivalent measures, methods, or practices, are required if you are engaged in gardening and lawn care at your home:

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 1 Never apply herbicides, insecticides, rodenticides, or fungicides along the banks of stream and drainage channels with flowing water, or along the shores of lakes and wetlands. Never apply these chemicals when it is raining.
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 2 Manually or mechanically remove weeds and other pests rather than using pesticides in areas of running or standing water.
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 3 Store all bags or piles of fertilizers and containers of pesticides in a covered location such as a garden shed.
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 4 Do not sweep or dump grass clippings, leaves, or twigs into any street, drainage ditch, or stormwater facility or pond.

- 5** Store piles of beauty bark and other erodible materials on lawns or other pervious areas. If these materials are stored on impervious areas such as driveways, cover them with a tarp so that rainwater does not wash the materials into storm drains or ditches.

OTHER OPTIONS AND TIPS

- 1** Purchase and use the least amount of pesticides necessary and always follow the label directions for application. Try pest control measures that do not require chemicals first. See <http://www.govlink.org/hazwaste/house/yard/problems> for information on how to reduce or avoid the use of pesticides.
- 2** Compost your yard wastes, or use yard waste as mulch in your yard or garden. Contact your local solid waste utility to see if yard waste pickup service is available. See <http://www.metrokc.gov/dnrp/swd/garbage-recycling/yardwaste.asp> for more information on yard waste collection and recycling services.
- 3** Educate yourself about alternatives to chemical pesticides and fertilizers such as integrated pest management techniques. Contact the Local Hazardous Waste Management Program at 206-296-4692, or visit <http://www.govlink.org/hazwaste/house/yard>.
- 4** Limit the amount of lawn and garden watering so that surface runoff does not leave your property. Check automatic sprinkler systems to ensure water is dispersed to landscaped areas and not to hard surfaces such as driveways and sidewalks that drain to storm drainage systems.

For more information or assistance in implementing these best management practices, contact the King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks Water and Land Resources Division at 206-296-1900.

Reader Note: The above requirements are the minimum required BMPs. If these BMPs fail to prevent discharges to the storm drainage system, you will be asked to take additional measures to correct the continued pollution discharges.